

Obwisana

Ghana



SINGING

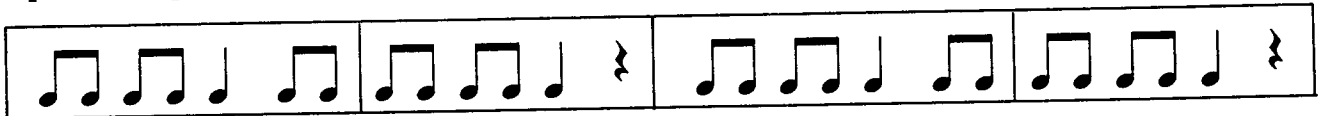
Tap the beat while singing Obwisana. Find different ways to keep the beat: pat shoulders, tap nose, etc. Invite children to sit in a circle with two rocks or sticks in front of each child. Children hold hands above the sticks in ready position before the song begins. On first beat of song, pick up sticks. On second beat, place sticks in front of person on the right. It may be helpful to chant the words "lift, drop, lift drop," in rhythm before trying the game with the song. Sing the song and play the game many times to give children opportunity for success. Older children may enjoy the challenge of picking up the sticks or rocks on the first beat, clicking them together on the second beat, and dropping on the third beat. This is a particular challenge, because the sticks move in a pattern of three (lift, click, pass) while the song moves in a pattern of two. Africans are noted for their complex rhythm performance.

PLAYING INSTRUMENTS

Invite some children to play drums to the beat while the rest of the class plays the game. Other instruments that would work well include sticks, claves, or agogo bells. For a real challenge, Invite one group of children to play the drums to a strong-weak pattern (two), while another group plays the sticks to a strong-weak-weak pattern (three). Enjoy the feeling of strong beats not always occurring together.

CREATING

Invite children to tap the rhythm of Obwisana (the pattern of the words). Put the rhythm on the board in four-beat phrases. Invite children to read and chant the rhythm using "ti-ti" for eighth notes and "ta" for quarter notes. Rearrange the phrases and challenge children to read them. Invite children to make up four beat phrases using eighth and quarter notes. The class could make up words to go with the new phrases.



LISTENING

Many recordings of music from Africa exist. Consider visiting a book store that carries recordings and look for recordings of music from Ghana. Children might enjoy listening to the kinds of instruments used in Ghana. Putumayo World Music has several wonderful recordings of music from other cultures that children love listening to, including one CD called "Africa." See www.putumayo.com

INTEGRATING

Show the class a map of Africa and find Ghana. Obwisana is sung by the children in Ghana. In Africa, singing games are played to help children learn about their culture and to transfer cultural values. The words mean "The rock has crushed my hand, Grandma," and the game itself is to assure children that no matter what happens, there will always be someone to take care of them. The passing is all about cooperation. The purpose is for everyone to have success. If one person makes a mistake, then each child feels responsible and works to help that child be successful. Discuss the difference between the way Ghana children think about playing games, and the way American children think which is usually to keep playing until the best one wins. Consider having the children do research on Ghana to learn more about the people and the culture.

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